

April 20, 2021

Board of Trustees
Clark Atlanta University

At the outset of the 20th century W.E.B. DuBois established Atlanta University as the foundation for intellectual work focusing on Black liberation. The groundbreaking studies that DuBois led served as a model for Black social scientists. In like manner, Mack Jones transformed the study of political science in the United States – situating Atlanta University as a pioneer in the study of Black politics.

These statements are not mere hyperbole. Mack Jones was the founding president (and motive force) of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists, and the founding chair of the doctoral program in political science at Atlanta University. To be sure, his incisive articles and essays gained him the respect and admiration of his peers and created a unique school of thought at Atlanta University. My own matriculation at Clark Atlanta University, beginning in 1997, was a result of the legacy of the AU Political Science Department. While Mack Jones is certainly not solely responsible for that legacy, more than anyone else he fostered an atmosphere for serious dialogue and critique with an eye always on substantive and meaningful scholarship responsive to the Black community.

Mack Jones taught and mentored countless political scientists who would go on to lead a variety of local and national organizations, university presidents, teachers, and professors, and those who engaged corporate America. Dare I say that each of us approach our work with the “responsibility” admonitions of Mack Jones looming over our shoulder. Despite the eclecticism of our career paths, talents, and goals; we are all imbued with a commitment to doing meaningful work. Jewel Prestage, the first Black woman to receive a PhD. in political science, said it best when reflecting on Mack Jones:

I want to say that it has been a pleasure for me to watch, interact with, and participate in your transition from an undergraduate student to a highly achieving professional. That has been a joy and I suppose one of the greatest joys associated with that overall big joy is your commitment to intellectual integrity, to vigorous pursuit of truth, and your willingness to take the risks involved in it. That has been admirable, but even more admirable is the fact that you always tend to find your way back from any adverse occurrence in your life. You seem to have, really, almost as much luck as W.E.B DuBois in the pursuit of truth as a lifelong commitment

It is very befitting to name the Clark Atlanta University Department of Political Science in honor of Mack Jones. He created a tradition for which we are all proud to be a part of and to borrow from Ossie Davis, when we honor Mack Jones, we honor the best in ourselves.

Respectfully,

Kelly Harris

Kelly Harris, PhD.
Director, Africana Studies
Seton Hall University
Kelly.harris@shu.edu
973-275-4687 (office)
773-575-9729 (cell)